

## Message Text

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64/46

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 OPR-02 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 AID-20 IGA-02 L-03 H-03 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 DODE-00 SS-20 NSC-10 A-01 SY-10

OMB-01 PRS-01 PA-04 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 OC-06

CCO-00 DRC-01 USSS-00 /132 W  
----- 019513

O P 181200Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 933

INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL CAN THO PRIORITY

AMCONSUL DANANG PRIORITY

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 852

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC ASAF PINT VS

SUBJ: JANUARY 18 INCIDENT AT NEWPORT COMMISSARY

1. SUMMARY: AT APPROXIMATELY 1300 JAN 18 AN INCIDENT OCCURRED AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE NEWPORT COMMISSARY (OPERATED BY THE DAO THROUGH AMERICAN SUB-CONTRACTORS) WHICH RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF ONE VIETNAMESE NATIONAL AND THE INJURY OF ANOTHER BY A CAR DRIVEN BY THE DEPENDENT WIFE OF A USAID EMPLOYEE. A LABOR DISPUTE WAS IN PROGRESS AT THE COMMISSARY AND A CROWD HAD GATHERED WHICH SOUGHT TO BLOCK THE ENTRANCEWAY. THE AMERICAN, MRS. STEWART, WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY THE  
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NATIONAL POLICE AND IS STILL THERE AS OF 1930. INTENSIVE

EFFORTS TO SECURE HER RELEASE ARE CONTINUING. SOME OF THE DEMONSTRATORS ARE STILL AT THE COMMISSARY AND ARE STILL DEMANDING THAT ONE CONTRACTOR OFFICIAL, AN AMERICAN, REMAIN THERE OVERNIGHT UNTIL ANOTHER MEETING CAN BE HELD TOMORROW. AN INTENSIVE EFFORT IS ALSO UNDERWAY TO RESOLVE THE LABOR DISPUTE. MISSION OFFICERS HAVE MET TWICE TODAY WITH CVT PRESIDENT TRAN QUOC BUU AND HAVE SOLICITED HIS ASSISTANCE IN RESOLVING THE LABOR DISPUTE. DESPITE SOME NEWS REPORTERS' ACCOUNTS OF "RIOTING," THE ONLY VIOLENCE WAS THE ACCIDENT AND A BRIEF SURGE OF ANGRY DEMONSTRATORS WHO BROKE THE WINDOWS OF MRS. STEWART'S VEHICLE. NATIONAL POLICE PROMPTLY INTERVENED EFFECTIVELY TO SECURE HER SAFETY. ALTHOUGH A FEW SHOTS WERE FIRED (PROBABLY INTO THE AIR) EYE WITNESS ACCOUNTS VARY AS TO WHETHER THERE WERE ADDITIONAL INJURIES. THE CITY IS CALM. END SUMMARY.

2. A DISPUTE BETWEEN WORKERS AT THE NEWPORT COMMISSARY AND A DAO CONTRACTOR. WORLDWIDE ASSOCIATES INC., HAS BEEN BUILDING FOR SEVERAL WEEKS EVER SINCE WORLDWIDE TOOK OVER THE OPERATION OF THE COMMISSARY FROM PA & E ON JAN 1. THE EMPLOYEES CHARGE THAT WORLD WIDE IS ATTEMPTING TO CUT THEIR SALARIES AND/OR FIRE LARGE NUMBERS IN CONTRAVENTION OF VIETNAMESE LABOR LAW. EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE CONTROVERSY HAVE BEEN UNAVAILING TO DATE.

3. ON JAN 18 A GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS GATHERED AT THE VEHICLE ENTRANCEWAY TO THE COMMISSARY AND SEVERAL SAT DOWN ON THE ROADWAY, BLOCKING IT. AN AMERICAN USAID DEPENDENT WIFE, MRS. STEWART, WHILE ATTEMPTING TO EXIT THE GATEWAY RAN OVER AND KILLED ONE VIETNAMESE MALE AND INJURED A VIETNAMESE FEMALE. (THE LATTER WE UNDERSTAND HAS BEEN TREATED AT A HOSPITAL AND RELEASED.) AN ANGRY CROWD FORMED AROUND MRS. STEWART'S CAR (THERE WAS ANOTHER AMERICAN WOMAN INSIDE) AND SOME WINDOWS WERE BROKEN. POLICE INTERVENED TO SECURE THE TWO WOMEN. SOME SHOTS WERE FIRED IN THE PROCESS. WHILE EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS VARY, WE CAN BE CERTAIN OF NO OTHER INJURIES.

4. MRS. STEWART AS OF 1930 IS STILL BEING HELD IN JAIL. INTENSIVE EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY TO SECURE HER RELEASE.

5. THE MISSION IS ALSO WORKING TO RESOLVE THE LABOR DISPUTE.  
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MISSION OFFICERS HAVE DISCUSSED THE NEWPORT INCIDENT TWICE TODAY WITH CVT PRESIDENT TRAN QUOC BUU, EXPRESSING OUR REGRET AT THE TRAGIC DEATHS AND SEEKING HIS ASSISTANCE IN REACHING AN EQUITABLE SETTLEMENT WITH THE WORKERS. WE ARE CONFIDENT BUU'S INFLUENCE WILL BE CONSTRUCTIVE.

6. EFFORTS HAVE ALSO BEEN UNDERWAY AT THE COMMISSARY ITSELF IN AN EFFORT TO DISPERSE THE DEMONSTRATORS, WHO FOLLOWING THE

AUTO-INFLICTED DEATH INITIALLY BLOCKADED ALL ENTRANCES AND "HELD" ABOUT 150 US COMMISSARY CUSTOMERS, 18 US CITIZEN EMPLOYEES OF WORLD WIDE, AND 123 VIETNAMESE WORLDWIDE EMPLOYEES INSIDE. THESE EFFORTS QUICKLY SECURED THE EXIT OF THE CUSTOMERS AND WE UNDERSTAND HAVE NOW SUCCEEDED IN RELEASING ALL THE VIETNAMESE AND ALL BUT ONE AMERICAN. THE DEMONSTRATORS ARE STILL INSISTING THAT THE SINGLE AMERICAN, WORLDWIDE PRESIDENT STEIGER, MUST SPEND THE NIGHT IN THE COMMISSARY UNTIL ANOTHER NEGOTIATING SESSION CONVENES TOMORROW. MR. STEIGER IS NOT BELIEVED TO BE AN ANY DANGER.

7. THERE HAS BEEN NO "RIOTING" AND THE CITY IS QUIET. EFFORTS TO FIND AN EQUITABLE SOLUTION TO THE LABOR DISPUTE WILL RESUME TOMORROW MORNING.  
MARTIN

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